

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman

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*Published by the Commission on Public Relations
of the National Christian Council of Japan*

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CABLE CODE: JAPACONCIL, ADDRESS: CHRISTIAN CENTER, 24-CHOME GINZA, TOKYO, JAPAN

Subscription Rates: Japan ¥700; Foreign (Sea mail) \$2.00; (Air mail) \$3.50.

No. 168

July 1, 1960

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RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE IN JAPAN

On the evening of June 15th, in the neighborhood of the Japanese Diet Building in Tokyo, a large demonstration by those opposed to the Japanese-American Mutual Security Treaty revision turned into a riot which blew unrest throughout the nation. Many who are not leftists, including Christians who have participated very little in political action, were caught up in a wave of popular feeling.

The Background

The revision of the mutual security treaty between the U.S. and Japan was the heart of the controversy. As the government of Premier Kishi moved toward its passage the movement in opposition gained in vehemence and numbers. Among Christians, too, a strong movement in opposition came into being. One example is the statement in opposition to the proposed treaty issued by the Evangelism Study Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan. This and the later statement by the YWCA were reported earlier. (CF., Christian Activities News, nos. 160 and 166).

However, there are among the Japanese people many who are in favor of the treaty revision, and this includes many Christians.

One of the main reasons for the opposition, which included many not of any leftist leaning, is the so-called "peace constitution" given Japan during the American Occupation. This constitution's article 9 forbids Japan to rearm. Many Japanese are concerned to defend this constitution and feel that re-armament would be in violation of the constitution. There is also widespread fear that such rearmament may put Japan again in the power of a rightist dictatorship and that it may lead toward a war in which Japan could only be destroyed.

Those who are in favor of the treaty feel that it is appropriate that Japan, as a part of her defence and as a contribution to the prevention of war, have American bases and rearm to some extent. The controversy between these two attitudes became more and more fierce.

May Nineteenth

From May 19th this controversy took a distinct turn in the direction of irreconcilable impasse and potential violence. On this day the government party, being in the majority, had determined to extend the Diet session and pass the treaty. The Socialist Party, equally determined to prevent the passage, had its members seat themselves in front of the door to the speaker's chamber so that he could not reach the Diet floor to open the session. Seeing this, the speaker called in the police to clear a path by removing the Socialist Party members. When the session opened in great confusion, the socialists refused to participate, and with only the government party majority in attendance, the diet session was extended and the treaty passed. Protesting the unprecedented entrance of police into the Diet building and what it considered the unilateral action of the government party, the Socialist Party refused to recognize the diet session extension or the passage of the treaty, taking up the curious warcry of "majority violence". They called for the resignation of Kishi and the dissolution of the Diet so that the issue could be carried to the people in new elections. This criticism was taken up by intellectuals, college professors and students, labor union leaders and members, and gradually, under the flagillation of the newspapers, a great number of the general populace. Many of these, especially the latter group, were not particularly opposed to the treaty, but felt that the attitude and actions of the Kishi government were reprehensible and that the proper procedure would be for the government to resign without taking action on the treaty in order for the people to express anew their will in the matter through elections. This loud outcry produced, in the minds of many people hitherto unconcerned, doubts concerning the desirability of the treaty. In addition, gradually the opposition, meeting no yielding on the part of the government, took the form of demonstrations. From June 19th on these demonstrations came to include many others besides socialists, leftist labor union members, communists and student leftists. They included ordinary students, housewives, white collar workers and a surprising number of young Christians and students from Christian schools. Therefore, it is a mistake to think of these demonstrations as initiated by or led exclusively by communists or leftists. Many groups

participated and for varied reasons.

The Eisenhower Visit

One of the unfortunate aspects of the situation was that June 19th, the day upon which the treaty was to go into effect, was also the day on which President Eisenhower was scheduled to arrive in Japan for the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Japanese-American diplomatic relations. The enemies of the treaty charged that Prime Minister Kishi had deliberately planned this coincidence, so that Eisenhower's prestige in Japan could be used to support his tottering government and gain support among the Japanese people for the treaty. The visit of Eisenhower had been intended as an entirely non-political event, but it thus became a part of the controversy. Those opposed to Kishi and the treaty demanded that Eisenhower not come. The communists of course, did all in their power to turn this feeling into an anti-American movement. Generally speaking, they failed. However, the great mass of people became deeply afraid that because of the aroused feelings of a minority and the calculated strategy of the communists, if Eisenhower should come as scheduled, some serious incident might mar his visit or he himself be in danger. As a result many Christians joined the chorus of voices advising the postponement of the visit. On June 9th the YWCA issued a statement requesting such postponement on the such a visit would be inappropriate in the present situation.

Eisenhower started for the Far East as planned and as he neared Japan, via Hawaii and the Philippines, the tension mounted. On June 13th, some of the National Christian Council Executive Committee members held a meeting to consider the problem, and issued a statement to the effect that if Eisenhower came he would be assured of a warm welcome from Christians in Japan. In addition, the NCC planned to meet on the 20th or 21st with the Pres. Kevin McCann of Defiance College, who was accompanying the president, to explain to him in detail the background and significance of the events in Japan.

The events of June 15th must be understood against this background.

June Fifteenth

On this day a large number of demonstrators gathered before the Diet grounds with signs calling for the resignation of the Kishi government and the dissolution of the Diet. That evening several truckloads of members of rightist groups armed with long clubs suddenly attacked the demonstrators, who had up to that time merely gathered quietly in the neighborhood. They attacked mainly at the outskirts and rear of the crowd. Among those attacked and sustaining various degrees of injuries, were a column of members of the Christian Peace Association. As the police did not intervene to stop the rightist violence, a great deal of criticism has been leveled against the police and the government. The most vocal critics of the government have charged that there was collusion among conservative party representatives and the rightist groups, thus raising before the populace as a whole the dreaded specter of pre-war fascist violence carried out under the tolerance of the police and government.

Whether this incident inflamed the demonstrators or not is not clear, but some time later a group of students, led by the militant Zengakuren students, stormed the Diet grounds. They were resisted by the police who expelled them using clubs, and later water hoses and finally tear gas. In the confusion, one girl student was killed, evidently trampled to death. Among those rather seriously injured by a group of police was a professor of Aoyama Gakuin University, famous Christian school, who had wandered into the area looking for a student about whom he was worried.

From this time on, the attitude of the general public began to shift. The seven main newspapers of the Tokyo area issued a joint statement calling for the cessation of violence.

On June 16th in the afternoon the NCC called a group of its Executive Committee members together to consider issuing a statement. It was decided to communicate to the government the feeling of the group that under the circumstances it was highly desirable for President Eisenhower's visit to be postponed. A special meeting of the Executive Committee was called the next morning to take action. But on the evening of the 16th the Japanese government acted to request the president not to come. The committee met as planned and, feeling that this government action might be misunderstood in America, decided to send a telegram to the NCCC in the USA. The following cable was drafted and sent:

FORMISCON NEWYORK
REGRETTABLE EVENTS PROMPTED POSTPONEMENT PRESIDENTIAL VISIT.
WAR INVOLVEMENT FEARS AND NEUTRALITY HOPES UNDERLAY
DEMONSTRATIONS. BASIC ISSUE INTERNAL POLITICS. VIGOROUS
GOOD WILL TOWARD AMERICAN PEOPLE CONTINUES.

MUTO, HIRAI

On the afternoon of the 17th approximately three thousand professors and students of Christian schools in the Tokyo area gathered in Hibiya Park and issued the following proclamation:

"The uni-lateral action of the government on May 19th passing the Mutual Security Treaty is a violation of democracy and cannot be approved. For the sake of the resurrection of democratic government in Japan we call for the resignation of the Kishi Cabinet, the immediate dissolution of the Diet, and the recognition of the invalidity of the one-sided action of the government party."

From Hibiya Park the group marched to the Diet building where they presented flowers in honor of the girl student killed in the demonstration of June 15th, and observed for her a moment of silent prayer. This quiet demonstration stood in sharp contrast to the noisy and violent tactics of the Zengakuren students, a contrast which was not lost on the public at large.

On June 18th, a group of ministers, including Rev. Takeshi Muto, Chairman of the NCC; Rev. Keikishi Shirai, Moderator of the United Church of Christ; and Rev. Tamaki Uemura, Chairman of the YWCA, gathered and issued the following statement which was presented to the Commissioner of police:

"As citizens and Christian ministers we cannot but deeply deplore the recent incidents of violence carried out in and around the Diet grounds. We understand the various difficulties with which the police have been faced day and night. However, we believe that there is reason for self-examination on your behalf, and we ask that the clubs worn by the policemen be used with great restraint, and that you endeavor to the utmost to prevent violence and to protect those threatened with violence."

During these weeks this was the way in which event succeeded event, centering around opposition to the Kishi government and the security treaty. It must be kept in mind that following the war Japan made a new start in democratic government. Democracy is still young and weak in Japan and spiritual undergirding is lacking. An additional cause is to be found in the fact that even among the majority of the people, who are not antagonistic to America, there is a tremendous fear that the treaty may involve Japan in a war. Moreover, there is a great deal of fear that re-armament will upset the economy and that it will drive Japan in the direction of rightist dictatorship.

Concerning the participation of students and teachers of Christian schools in the recent events, Dr. Hachiro Yuasa, President of International Christian University and Chairman of the Board of the Christian Education and School Association, speaking as an individual, made the following statement:

That the Japanese people as a whole are not anti-American, no enlightened person can seriously question, in spite of the recent unprecedented political upheaval which has caused so much misgivings and even indignation in America, even among our Christian friends.

Needless to say the causes and circumstances of the violent disturbances are complex and complicated. Slogans shouted, placards carried, and demonstrations organized had much in common, to be sure, but actually the motives, purposes, ideologies, and powers behind the scene were definitely diverse and even diametrically opposed to each other.

One thing is undoubtable. It was a victory for International Communism. Consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, practically everybody contributed to bring it about. The International Communists expertly exploited the unpopularity of the Kishi Government, confused real issues, and blinded sincere, well-meaning, peace-minded students and citizens including Christians. The trouble with them was not their intentions but their political naivete; for example, neutralism. What was wrong with them was not so much their abuse of freedom but their political immaturity; for example, their superficial comprehension of democracy.

The real and immediate concern of thinking Christians in Japan at this critical time is the potential danger of rising anti-Japanese sentiments and movements in America. Anti-Japan measures in America today may force the confused

Japanese people to turn toward the wrong direction. Losing the friendship of America, Japan in desperation may be driven tomorrow to fall into the trap of sinister International Communism. It stands to reason now to expect the communists to intensify their propaganda and subversive infiltration in order to augment their present victory by exploiting the tragic developments involving both America and Japan.

Admittedly Japan is in predicament. Now is the time she needs a real friend. I, for one, firmly believe that Japan needs friendly American more than ever, and, if I may dare say so, America needs a free, democratic Japan just as much.

Note: The editor regrets the lateness of this report and wishes to announce that this issue represents a combination of the June 15th and July 1st issues.

